

The Cochin State Political Conference.

(Trichur : 20th NOVEMBER, 1937.)

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

OF

Dr. PATTABHI SITARAMAYYA



1937.

THE COCHIN STATE POLITICAL CONFERENCE

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Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya's Presidential Address

FRIENDS,

I come to you less on your invitation and more of my own accord. It is a part of my programme to visit as many States in India as possible in connection with the States' work that I have undertaken. It is lucky that this long-cherished desire of mine should have found a reflection in your decision to invite me to preside over your political conference. Under the circumstances I need make no apology for coming here to-day. If for nothing else it is the duty of a follower of the Mithakshara Law under the Patriarchal State to visit a part of the country which is adjacent to his own but which follows a Matriarchal State under a Marmakatayam Law. The Malayalese and ourselves, as Andhras, had lived side by side with each other for years together in jails and during our College days also earlier we lived side by side with the Tamils and the Kanarese and the Oriyas without realising the vast differences in customs and manners which subsist between Malayalese and the rest of the country. I am free to confess that it is only latterly when all of us assembled once again under the hospitable roof of His Majesty in the penitentiaries of Vellore and elsewhere that we had the time and leisure to study these systems in detail. And after months and years spent in the company of friends from

Malabar I cannot pretend that I have understood all the differences that subsist between that system and this. A natural longing therefore has been engendered in us to see your part of the country in flesh and blood and to understand how you manage your affairs over here. But in Cochin there is an additional circumstance which marks you out as standing apart from the rest of the Malabar in your Civic affairs. You are the subjects of an Indian Prince, who, for all appearances, enjoys a kind of independence and ranks as an ally of the British with whom his relations are settled by a series of *Sanads*, engagements and treaties. You are, therefore, much more different from us in Andhradesa than those Malayalee friends whom we may come across in Calicut and other parts of British Malabar. Thus it is that there is an added interest to me in this visit of mine to your picturesque country.

You are holding a session of your Political Conference in this State. You may call it a District Conference or a Provincial Conference as you please. That does not matter; but mostly the Conference deals with the Internal Affairs of the State—and I must frankly confess that I have no intimate knowledge of the administrative details which alone would entitle the President of a Conference to make any pronouncements upon them. I am perfectly ignorant of matters relating to your administration but there is so much literature published from time to time relating to the affairs of Cochin in the newspapers of the day that it is impossible not to know certain outstanding facts though such a knowledge must necessarily be of an elementary type. For instance it is a well-known fact that the daughters of Cochin stand foremost in India in point of literacy; while for the percentage of literacy in the whole country the Malayalese stand foremost in the whole of India. It is no wonder then that in your Council representation should have been specially given to women for which purpose the strength of the Council had to be increased by two so as not to disturb the balance of the Elective strength of the Legislative Council till then maintained between

various groups with a corresponding reduction in the number of nominated seats. You have thus a total strength of 57 in your Council with 38 elected seats and 19 nominated members. There is nothing very extraordinary in such a reservation for if only your women would care for it they could beat the men in the general elections themselves without invoking the aid of a reservation. What is of real interest to us coming from British Indian Provinces is that the Muslim representation is likewise limited to a reservation of seats and not based upon separate electorates. You know in India the separation of the electorate of the Muslims first came into existence during the time of Lord Minto and we put our seal upon it at the Lucknow Congress in 1916 by signing a concordat between Hindus and Muslims, agreeing to separate our electorates, which was bodily accepted by Mr. Montague and incorporated in the Reforms Act of 1919 and which has acquired a fresh lease of life under the Government of India Act of 1935. It is a great good fortune that you in Cochin should have survived the tradition of British India and thrown away the separate electorates because your Muslim brothers wanted to participate in the general electorate. It is but right therefore that in view of the desire of the Muslim community to remain in the general constituencies Government should have been pleased to order that the special communal constituencies for the Muslims should be abolished and that the two seats reserved for the Muslim community be assigned to suitable general constituencies. This would give them the advantage of being able to contest other general seats and I trust that the good example that you have set in this remote corner of India will be copied ere long by the rest of the country so as to build up Indian Nationalism on a true and enduring basis.

You have effected many useful reforms in your administration the latest of which is that you have decided to print your stamps in India so saving Rs. 52,000 a year in printing and paper charges. You have included the flag staff of Tippu Sultan as well as his palace at Trichur

among your ancient monuments for preservation and protection and have given attention to the publication of important archaeological works.

Much has been said about the progress that Cochin has made in its various departments of administration but whatever may be the measure of that progress it is obvious that it is entirely due to the beneficence arising from personal and autocratic rule. The time has come when Cochin should stand in the vanguard of the Indian States in consonance with the traditions of culture and literacy that it has built up. It should be the first state really to proclaim responsible government for the people of the State. Your Maharaja is an old and revered scion of an ancient family peculiarly susceptible to all the traditions which constituted the heritage of such families. These traditions sometimes abound in good and sometimes are capable of being questioned as to their propriety. It is thus that on the Temple-Entry question distinction has had to be drawn between this State and its neighbouring State and when people have asked me why Cochin should not to the line with Travancore my simple answer has been that a Prince who is four score and two may not walk as fast as a Prince who is six and twenty much less run a race with him. We see a perpetual revolution taking place before our very eyes. Yet we have not the capacity to abstract ourselves from our environment. That is the merit or the demerit of individual character. We often begin where our fathers ended and must not complain that if our sons do not begin where we began. The poor man strives hard to acquire money and runs a Motor Car and his son begins with the Motor Car and aspires to the Aeroplane. If therefore the Prince of Cochin has not been able to see eye to eye with Mahatma Gandhiji, all that we can say is that under a personal and absolute rule you must be prepared to take the good and the evil that come our way without murmur. But murmur we must in order to alter the character of the rule itself, and it is only then that the character of that rule would not depend upon the personal equations of the

ruler. Human character is a complex study and very often you come across a blend of opposite traits in the same person, a blend of the noblest and the meanest qualities and a blend, too, of the most reactionary and of the most radical proclivities, a blend of extravagance and miserliness, a blend, at times, of utter conservatism in matters religious with the fullest liberalism in matters political. If however we have to balance these opposite elements we have to make a blend of the personal equations of the representatives of the people, duly combined in what is called a Democratic State and that is why I submit that we have out-lived the time when we should count upon the beneficence of a ruler's character for the good that his people expect to enjoy at his hands. We live in days when the good and evil that fall to our lot must be largely of our own making, wrought by our own hands, fashioned by our own brains and consolidated by our own strength. You are far away from even the fringe of such a government in your State. You have not got a Legislative Council composed of wholly elected representatives and when such an innovation will have to be introduced the Counsels of moderation will perhaps tend for a time to abridge the rights which such a legislature may be admitted to by means of safeguards, checks and balances, deductions from power which are the order of the day everywhere in the processes of expansion of popular rights. Remember therefore that you cannot simply keep waiting for the Monsoon of responsible government to break with precision from the South-West or the North-east. You must raise the temperature yourselves. You must gather your own vapours and store them. You must condense them in good time and bring them down from the highest heavens to the earth below as the enlivening waters of Indian Nationalism. When you bring them and absorb them and re-vitalise your life not merely by pursuing an expectant policy with a temporising programme reconciling yourself to what has been given and what has been taken away from time to time, you will realise that a general awakening, a consci-

ous demand, a strenuous effort, would be necessary in order to ensure that responsible government shall be instituted in your state. It is your good luck that unlike some of his compeers your prince is devoted to the good of the people so that you have not to fight the personal failings that we come across amongst the princes elsewhere, but passive virtues however good they may be in themselves must be pressed into service for hastening the advent of active programmes of National uplift. This can be achieved only in the measure in which there is a general awakening of the masses from end to end.

At this stage I may venture to call your attention to the chasm that has been created between the masses and the classes. We who have received English Education have come to regard ourselves as the repositories of culture and look down upon our neighbours in the villages who grow the corn for us, who toil and moil for the nation and who strive to feed and clothe their fellow men and women. What do we do in towns ? We lead a kind of parasitic life,—when the people in villages grow produce, we draw a commission for selling it, when they have a quarrel, we make money over it, when they fall ill, we earn a fee therefrom. Under the British the towns have come into prominence, not that there were no towns prior to the British, but that they have now come into existence as parasitic outgrowths or excrescences of the Tree of Life. They serve to drain the wealth of the villages to cities and from cities abroad. In ancient times our towns were the emporiums of the artistic goods manufactured in the villages and they brought wealth by their sale abroad from outside to themselves and transmitted the bulk of it to the villages. To-day the course of money is in the opposite direction, running as it does from village to town and from town to city and from city abroad. For every article you use is foreign. The foreign articles have invaded and found their place in your bed-room, in your office, from morning to evening in school and college, in factories, in temples and places of worship. You see to-day foreign

goods in universal use. In olden times the princes were the patrons of indigenous arts and crafts. To-day they have made their palaces the out-houses of England imitating in a somewhat inelegant manner the fashions and fabrics of the West. You in Cochin may have escaped the onslaughts of the Western Civilization somewhat in the Palace and the Darbar but western influences are fast growing in upon us and I may be permitted to sound a timely note of warning.

While responsible government may clothe us with all the external forms of democracy, it is only the rebuilding of Indian Nationalism on sound lines with due regard for the traditions that form our heritage that can ensure food and raiment to our masses and adequate housing facilities as well to them. This will help to build up a real State which will be devoted as much to the pursuit of its ministerial functions as to its constituent. Mere law and order carry us nowhere when we do not re-generate the people and charge them with a sense of duty which quickens their conscience and makes each individual a State in himself or herself. Of the three sanctions that lie behind a well-ordered society, namely Law, Public opinion, and individual conscience, the first is a physical one based on force, the second an intellectual one based on conviction, and the third a moral one based upon a developed instinct. Of these the last is the greatest. It is this instinct that engenders in us a sense of duty, not merely a sense of right, which enables us to recognise that every duty and every right carry with them their own corresponding duty, and therefore we have to realise that we have duties as well as rights. If we do this, we shall be able to locate ourselves aright not merely in this small State which forms somewhat an appreciable part of India but we shall be able to locate ourselves in this vast country with an area of 18 lakhs of square miles and a population of 35 crores, as an integral part thereof. It is thus that your State will have to learn to federate itself with its fellow States and with the provinces of India.

It has been truly said that our country is a continent but a continent with a unity of culture and civilisation, historical tradition and biologic descent. It consists of various sub-nationalities whose individual culture only tends to enrich both in volume and in content the culture of Indian Nationalism. It is thus that we aim at unity, not uniformity, of civic laws and social institutions which form the foundations of true Indian nationalism. To this end we have to piece together the 561 States of India and the 11 provinces. The British people as they began to establish their sway over this country were astute enough to recognise that it would not be wise to take the whole country in their own hands and they have therefore left islets of so-called self-governing territories which they term the States. These States are governed by princes who are ostensibly independent but who take their orders in almost all matters from the Political Agent, who takes them in turn from the Political Secretary, and who from the Viceroy and the Secretary of State. Thus whatever transformations may be taking place in the British Provinces in the way of establishing democratic rule,—our achievement may be little but the ideal is not disputed,—the fact remains that in the Indian States themselves the people have not been admitted in the first place to a real voice in the affairs of internal government of the States and in the second place to any voice in the federal affairs of the country. Neither the Indian National Congress, nor even the Muslim League, disputes the propriety of a federal structure as the only solution of the problem of bringing together the various provinces and States of India but the psuedo-Federation which has been concocted by the British political Doctors is a poisonous prescription wholly deleterious to the health and well-being of the Indian Body Politic. It is a fissiparous institution releasing centrifugal forces where it ought to have established a centripetal structure. The people of the States do not figure in the picture. The States do doubtless enjoy a measure of representation, which is very large indeed, being 125 out of

375 in the Lower House and 104 out of 260 in the Upper House. This large representation however is given not to the people of the States but to the princes and the princes send their nominees to the Legislature. When you consider the bondage that the princes are subjected to, it must be taken for granted that the representatives have to take their orders from the princes, who are in turn subjected to the personal rule of the hierarchy of officials who have been already described. Instead of building Indian Nationalism upon the basis of Indian States and provinces we raise not a single pointed spire but a series of jogged turrets wanting in unity and artistic beauty alike. As long as the people of the States do not figure in the picture of Federation so long cannot federation be regarded as genuine or beneficent. Remember that your prince has to forego a number of his rights and privileges in joining the Federation. It is but right that he should do so because when you join a larger body you must adopt a policy of give and take. You are taking a number of additional privileges and therefore must give away some of the existing ones. But who is called upon to do all this? Not the people of the States whose interests are badly affected by this change but the princes themselves who are subject to extraneous influences and who are not even taking their people into their confidence in the matter of such an absorption into this spurious Body. Responsible Government alone in Cochin will not solve your problem, for you cannot be a floating body in the farmament of Indian Nationalism. You must co-ordinate yourself with the fellow States and Provinces. Therefore, the people of the States have a double duty laid upon them, namely, the duty of asserting the popular voice in the internal affairs, and also the duty of claiming their legitimate share in the federal structure. The latter has been denied to them in the scheme of Government of India Act and therefore it is up to you to represent to your Prince that it will not be to your interest that he should join over your heads a Federation which is positively designed to hinder India's progress—not

helping it in any wise. I shall not detain you with a description of reactionary phases of this federation in detail but I shall broadly hint to you the outlines of it and the reasons why it is unacceptable to us. $E = 20/5$

The Government of a country is one and indivisible. It cannot be broken up into parts except for administrative convenience. But the breaking up of Government of India into vertical divisions based exactly on the system on which the provincial dyarchy was instituted in the Montford Reforms is a process which is not designed to advance administrative conveniences but to retard popular control. Thus it is that the military department has been taken away from the region of popular authority. The finance minister would be there but he is subjected to the control of a financial adviser whose advice, as you know, would be practically mandatory. The Post and the Telegraphs are to be transferred to us but the Posts may not deliver our letters and the telegraphs may not even receive our messages. As for Railways we know that the railway authorities reserve the right not to issue tickets from place to place whenever Government thinks it fit to do so. But the most annoying part of the subject is that Railway rates—are not transferred to us. You know that the British Empire exists in India for the development of its commerce and railway rates are the keys of a country's commerce. You can popularise foreign commodities in this country by admitting them to cheaper transportation charges than the Indian commodities and when the prices and production may not be able to achieve this result it would be infinitely easy of accomplishment by a control of Railway rates. That is how Australian wheat sells cheaper in the Punjab than Punjab wheat, Siamese rice sells cheaper in India than South-Indian rice, Italian marble sells cheaper all over India than Jaypore marble and Belgian iron sells cheaper than Indian iron. To-day the slump in cotton has drawn public attention to the heavy Railway rates on cotton which men raised in the Post-War era by 50 p.c. Then with regard to currency and coinage we have

no voice in determining the silver in the Rupees or the gold in the sovereign or the metallic reserve of silver and gold that should stand behind the currency notes in circulation. The Reserve Bank has been entrusted with this duty and that Bank is a close corporation the affairs of which are entrusted to an official body with only 8 out of 15 members as elected directors but even this quota will be full only at the end of 5 years from the inception of the Bank. You know well how imports and exports are regulated by manipulating the exchange and how the rise of exchange from 16 to 18 pence has achieved remarkable results in facilitating imports into this country and penalising exports from this country. The old order required that a determination of the exchange ratio should be by legislature. But now it is taken away from the domain of federal legislature and will be entirely in the hands of the Reserve Bank. Above all the C. I. D's are not transferred and you know the C. I. D. is a powerful body which can achieve unexpected results over the head of Local administrations; and again the Services are not transferred. We have already begun to see the effects of Services not being transferred to the popular ministers, for we can exercise no disciplinary control over the bulk of the people who are responsible for the conduct of affairs in this country. All these are matters of interest to the Provinces and the States in India in equal measure. I have referred to them merely because when Cochin joins the Federation there will be serious repercussions upon the internal affairs of Cochin for which the people of Cochin would not be held responsible. I do not wish to disturb the equanimity of your life or the placid contentment of the masses in the States but you and I will no longer be strangers to each other each pursuing his own occupation in his allotted span of territory. We shall have to sail together in the boat of Federation and it is but right that we should be able to visualise all the difficulties and distempers we shall be subjected to in our voyage. Accordingly, I have undertaken this little bit of work namely to invite the atten-

tion of the people of the States to the various aspects of Federation that is about to be established.

The Indian National Congress is struggling hard to combat the coming Federation. How far it will be a success remains to be seen, but whether you can prevent the institution of Federation or not, the fact will remain that we shall not be voluntary participants in working out this spurious scheme and we invoke your assistace in preventing what will equally be disastrous to you and to us. You and we are not different from one another. You are blood of our blood and the bone of our bone. The sooner we recognise that we should stand or fall together, the sooner shall we be able to realise that the India of the future will be worthy of our joint citizenship only in the measure in which our joint labours may be designed to refashion this Government.

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ALL-INDIA CONVENTION

**Delhi, March 19,
1937.**

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Comrades,

We are used to our Congress gatherings, vast and impressive and representing the will of the Indian people for freedom. Behind them lie half a century of our country's history and a tradition of growth and change and adaptation to fresh needs and new situations. But to-day we meet in this Convention under novel conditions, for this Convention has no background except what we choose to give it, has no future except such as we determine. Well established institutions and organisations develop, in the course of time, a certain will and momentum which carry them forward almost apart from the desires of their constituent elements. They have an individuality which expresses itself in its own particular way, a certain stability and steadiness of purpose, as well as a certain conservatism. They do not easily move out of their moorings; like an elephant, they are heavy of movement, but when they move, they have all the greater momentum, and they change the shape of things. Such is our Congress.

But this Convention is new and few people seem to know what it is or what it is going to be. Some doubt is justified; and yet all of us know well our moorings and our purpose, and though, as a Convention, we may be new, we have our roots in those past struggles which are written in the history of the Congress and our freedom movement. This Convention is a child of the Congress, looking to it for strength and guidance.

In writing this address I suffer from a disability. During the few days that will elapse between now and the meeting of the Convention, the major issues before us will be decided by the All-India Congress Committee. I do not know what these final decisions will be, and so, when this written message changes to the spoken word, much may have happened which might need variation or emphasis. And yet, whatever this variation might be, the Congress policy and programme are clear and fixed for us by repeated resolutions of the Congress itself and by our Election Manifesto. We must move within that orbit and any attempt to go out of it would be a betrayal of that policy and of the larger interests for which the Congress has stood. Those of you who have been elected to the new legislatures have asked the suffrage of the people on the basis of the Congress election manifesto, and you must inevitably take your stand on this. The very greatness of your success at the polls is striking testimony of the response of the masses to this policy and programme. Millions have testified to their faith and confidence in this; they have given it the final seal of the approval of the Indian people.

The electorate was confined to a bare ten per cent of our people, but everybody knows that the lower down the scale we go, the greater is the Congress strength. The remaining ninety per cent are even more solidly for the Congress than the ten per cent who have supported us. Though our success has been overwhelming and has confounded our opponents, and swept away the representatives of the big vested interests who opposed us, it

should be remembered that the whole machinery of election was so designed as to weaken us. The pressure of an autocratic and entrenched Government was exercised against us, and behind it were ranged all the reactionaries and obscurantists who always flourish under the shadow of imperialism. Yet we won in resounding manner.

Only in regard to the Muslim seats did we lack success. But our very failure on this occasion has demonstrated that success is easily in our grasp and the Muslim masses are increasingly turning to the Congress. We failed because we had long neglected working among the Muslim masses and we could not reach them in time. But where we reached, especially in the rural areas, we found almost the same response, the same anti-imperialist spirit, as in others. The communal problem, of which we hear so much, seemed to be utterly non-existent, when we talked to the peasant, whether Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. We failed also among the Muslims because of their much smaller electorate which could be easily manipulated and coerced by authority and vested interests. But I am convinced that, even so, we would have had a much larger measure of success if we had paid more attention to the Muslim masses. They have been too long neglected and misled and they deserve special consideration. I have no manner of doubt that they are turning to the Congress to seek relief from their innumerable burdens and their future co-operation is assured, provided we approach them rightly and on the basis of economic questions.

We have too long thought in terms of pacts and compromises between communal leaders and neglected the people behind them. That is a discredited policy and I trust that we shall not revert to it. And yet some people still talk of the Muslims as a group dealing with the Hindus or others as a group, a medieval conception which has no place in the modern world. We deal with economic groups to-day and the problems of poverty and unemployment and national freedom are common for the Hindu, the Muslim, the Sikh, and the Christian. As soon as we leave the top fringe, which is continually talking of percentages of seats in the legislatures and State jobs, and reach the masses, we come up against these problems. This way lies the ending of what has long been known as the communal problem.

One of the most remarkable signs of the times is the ferment amongst the Muslims in India, both the intelligentsia and the masses. Without any effective leadership, they have drifted aimlessly, and they resent this helpless position and feel that the communal leadership they have had has weakened them politically, in spite of the trivial and superficial gains which they are supposed to have got from an imperialism which seeks to wean them away from the national movement. Muslim young men and old, and the Muslim press, are full of this self-analysis, and the desire to get out of the communal rut and line up with the forces of freedom and progress is strong within them. They see how the Congress has swept away Hindu communal or-

ganisations, how it has captured the imaginations of the masses, and they feel a little desolate and left out. They want to share in the triumphs of today and tomorrow, and are prepared to take their share of the burdens also. And so this election and our campaign, though they resulted in the loss of Muslim seats as a rule, have been a triumph for us even in regard to the Muslims. They have gone some way to lay the ghost communalism. It is for us now to go ahead and welcome the Muslim masses and intelligentsia in our great organisation and rid this country of communalism in every shape and form.

The elections have many lessons to teach us but the outstanding fact is this: Where we went to the masses direct we won overwhelmingly. Our partial lack of success in some provinces was clearly due to the Congress organisation there being confined to the cities and having little contact with the peasantry. We must remedy these failings and speak more and more the language of the masses and fashion our policy to meet their needs. We must carry the Congress organisation to every village, the Congress message to every mud hut.

I have referred to some of our failings and some of our failures. It is well to remember these and not to allow ourselves to be swept away by success into forgetting them. We build for the future and our foundations must be well and truly laid. To win an election is a small matter for us; we are out to win the freedom of our people,

Having disposed of these failures let me refer to the success that has come to us, for it is this tremendous success, not surprising for us who know our people, but astounding and upsetting to others, that is the outstanding feature of these elections. How carefully and lovingly the Government had nursed the great vested interests of India, encouraged the big landlords and communalists, helped them to organise themselves to oppose us, and looked confidently for success in its evil venture! Where are they now, these pillars of Imperialism in India and exploiters of the Indian people? Sunk almost without trace, overwhelmed by the sea of Indian humanity, swept away by the big broom of the masses from the political scene. Like a house of cards, they have fallen at the touch of reality; even so will others go who oppose India's freedom, and a day will come when British imperialism throttles and crushes our people no more and is a dream of the past for us.

We went to our people and spoke to them of freedom and the ending of their exploitation; we went to that forgotten creature, the Indian peasant, and remembered that his poverty was the basic problem of India; we identified ourselves with him in his suffering and talked to him of how to get rid of it through political and social freedom. We told him of imperialism and of this new Act and Constitution which bind us still further and which we were out to end and replace by *panchayat raj*, fashioned by a Constituent Assembly, a grand *Panchayat* of the nation, elected by all our people.

We read out to him our Election Manifesto and explained its significance. He and his kind gathered in vast numbers to hear us and, listening to the Congress message, his sunken eyes glistened and his shrunken starved body rose up in enthusiasm and the wine of hope filled his veins. Who that saw that vision can forget it, or that subsequent sight of thousands marching to the polling booths in disciplined array, ignoring pressure and threat, disdaining the free conveyances and free food offered to them by our opponents? It was a pilgrimage for them to give their allegiance to the Congress, to vote for the ending of the new Constitution, for the establishment of *panchayati raj* when they would themselves have power to liquidate the poverty that consumed them.

That is the significance of this election. If there is any meaning in democracy, if this complicated and expensive apparatus of elections and voting has any sense behind it and is not an impertinent farce, then the Indian people have spoken, so that even the deaf might hear, and proclaimed that they will not have this Constitution. They have given notice to quit to British imperialism. This Constitution must therefore go, lock, stock and barrel, and leave the field clear for our Constituent Assembly.

We talk of and discuss our policy in the legislatures, but all this is vain and profitless parleying before the fundamental and dominant fact of the situation that this Constitution must go. So the people of India have decided and we shall be false and unfaithful representatives of our people if we allow

ourselves to forget this fact contrary to that emphatic direction.

I know that there are elements amongst us who are too fond of slurring over these fundamentals, who look longingly to office, and who have even compromised the dignity of our great cause and of the Congress by discussing the personnel of ministries long before the question of acceptance or non-acceptance of ministerial office has been decided by the All-India Congress Committee. Whatever their views may be on this issue, whatever the decision of the A. I. C. C. might be, I would have them remember, now and for the future, that no Congressman, worthy of his name, no Congress member of a legislature, can act except with the dignity and discipline that our cause and organisation demand. I would have them remember the Election Manifesto and the Congress resolutions on the basis of which they sought the suffrage of the people. Let no one forget that we have entered the legislatures not to co-operate in any way with British imperialism but to fight and end this Act which enslaves and binds us. Let no one forget that we fight for independence.

What is this Independence? A clear, definite, ringing word, which all the world understands, with no possibility of ambiguity. And yet, to our misfortune, even that word has become an object of interpretation and misinterpretation. Let us be clear about it. Independence means national freedom in the fullest sense of the word; it means, as our pledge has stated, a severance of the British connec-

tion. It means anti-imperialism and no compromise with empire. Words are hurled at us: dominion status, Statute of Westminster, British Commonwealth of Nations, and we quibble about their meaning. I see no real commonwealth anywhere, only an empire exploiting the Indian people and numerous other peoples in different parts of the world. I want my country to have nothing to do with this enormous engine of exploitation in Asia and Africa. If this engine goes, we have nothing but good-will for England, and in any event we wish to be friends with the mass of the British people.

Dominion status is a term which arose under peculiar circumstances and it changed its significance as time passed. In the British group of nations, it signified a certain European dominating group exploiting numerous subject peoples. That distinction continues whatever change the Statute of Westminster might have brought about in the relations *inter se* of the members of that European dominating group. That group represents British imperialism and it stands in the world to-day for the very order and forces of reaction against which we struggle. How then can we associate ourselves willingly with this order and these forces? Or is it conceived that we might, in the course of time and if we behave ourselves, be promoted from the subject group to the dominating group, and yet the imperialist structure and basis of the whole will remain more or less as it is? This is a vain conception having no relation to reality, and even if it were within the realms of possibility, we should have none of it, for we would

then become partners in imperialism and in the exploitation of others. And among these others would probably be large numbers of our own people.

It is said, and I believe Gandhiji holds this view, that if we achieved national freedom, this would mean the end of British imperialism in India, and a necessary result of this would be the winding up of British imperialism itself. Under such conditions there is no reason why we should not continue our connection with Britain. There is force in the argument for our quarrel is not with Britain or the British people, but with British imperialism. But when we think in these terms, a larger and a different world comes into our ken, and dominion status and the Statute of Westminster pass away from the present to the historical past. That larger world does not think of a British group of nations, but of a world group based on political and social freedom.

To talk, therefore, of dominion status, in its widest significance, even including the right to separate, is to confine ourselves to one group, which of necessity will oppose and be opposed by other groups, and which will essentially be based on the present decaying social order. Therefore we can not entertain this idea of dominion status in any shape or form; it is independence we want, not any particular status. Under cover of that phrase, the tentacles of imperialism will creep up and hold us in their grip, though the outer structure might be good to look at.

And so our pledge must hold and we must labour for the severance of the British connection. But let us repeat again that we favour no policy of isolation or aggressive nationalism, as the word is understood in the Central European countries to-day. We shall have the closest of contacts, we hope, with all progressive countries, including England, if she has shed her imperialism.

But all this discussion about dominion status is academic talk. It is many years now since India put that idea by and there can be no reversion to it. To-day, with the whole world in the cauldron of change and disaster threatening it, this lawyer's jargon seems strangely out of place. What counts to-day for us is to break and end this Constitution. What counts for the world is Spain and British rearmament and the French armament loan, and the frantic and terrific race to be ready for war before this catastrophe comes to overwhelm civilisation. When will this come, suddenly and unannounced, and make a wreck of the modern world? That is the question for you and all of us, for on our answer and on our ability to cope with this crisis will depend the future of the Indian people. We have bigger decisions to take, graver choices before us, than those of lawyers' making.

Those decisions and that action require strength and perseverance and a disciplined nation. They require the masses in intelligent and organised movement for mass ideals and mass welfare. They demand that joint front of anti-imperialist forces, of which we have heard so much, and of which our

National Congress is the living embodiment. It is not by mere votes in the legislatures, or petty reforms, or even artificial deadlocks, that freedom will come, but by the mobilisation of mass strength, and the co-ordination of our struggle in the legislatures with our struggle outside. For, essentially, we aim at the conquest of power, power for the Indian people to shape their destiny, and that power will only come through our own strength and will to achieve.

This is why the Working Committee has laid stress again on the extra-parliamentary activities of Congress members of the legislatures and on mass contacts. Our overwhelming success in the elections will be wasted if we do not keep up our intimate contacts with the masses and seek to serve them and mobilise them for the great tasks ahead.

With this background of principles and Congress policy we have to consider the narrower issue of what we are to do inside the legislatures. This narrow issue, and especially the question of acceptance or non-acceptance of ministerial office, has given rise to much controversy, and has often been considered divorced from the more fundamental factors of the situation. If we remember these factors, and the Congress and the Working Committee have stressed them again and again, the issue becomes narrowed down still further. Indeed it hardly arises, except indirectly, for, as I have already stated, the outstanding fact of the elections is that the people of this country have given their verdict clearly, unequivocally and emphatically against this

slave Constitution. If the British Government has any respect for democracy and still sees virtue in democratic procedure, as it so loudly proclaims, then it has no alternative but to withdraw this Constitution and Act. That is our position and our demand, and so long as it is not acceded to we shall labour and struggle to that end.

Congress members of the legislatures have their work cut out for them by Congress resolutions. That work is primarily to fight the Act and press and work for a Constituent Assembly. Some people, in their ignorance, have imagined that this Convention is itself the Constituent Assembly, and that it is going to draft a new Constitution for India. This Convention is going to do no such thing. That is not its function and the time for drawing up India's Constitution is not yet. Nor is the Constituent Assembly a magnified All Parties Conference. The Constituent Assembly that we demand will come into being only as the expression of the will and the strength of the Indian people; it will function when it has sanctions behind it to give effect to its decisions without reference to outside authority. It will represent the sovereignty of the Indian people and will meet as the arbiter of our destiny.

How can this Assembly meet to-day when British Imperialism holds forcible sway here with its armies of occupation, and spies and informers and secret service, and the denial of civil liberty? When so many of our loved ones and comrades languish in prison or detention camp? When this monstrous Constitution has been imposed upon us, despite our indignant

repudiation of it?

Therefore let us be clear about it. There is no room for a Constituent Assembly in India till we have in effect removed these burdens and obstructions, and the will of the Indian people can have sovereign play. And, till then, there is no room in India for any other constitution imposed upon us; there is room only, unhappily, for conflict and struggle between an imperialism that dominates and a nationalism that seeks deliverance. That nationalism is no weakling to-day and, though it may have to wait awhile for its deliverance, it will not tolerate domination and dictation.

So we are told by the Congress to go to the legislatures not to co-operate, for this so-called co-operation would only be another name for submission to dictation, but to fight the Act. Whatever decision we might take on other issues, that basic policy remains and must remain. Inevitably it follows that we cannot have any alliances with individuals and groups who do not subscribe to this policy.

It is within this narrow framework that we have to consider the question of office acceptance. That question will have been decided by the All India Congress Committee by the time we meet in Convention and I stand before you, and by that decision this Convention will be bound. So I cannot say much about it here. I have often given expression to my views on this subject and our electoral victory has not changed them in any way. But we have to

remember that whatever the decision of the All India Congress Committee might be, the whole logic of Congress resolutions and declarations and policy leads us to maintain a spirit of non-cooperation towards this Constitution and Act. Ordinarily in a democratic constitution to have a majority means an acceptance of ministerial responsibility. To refuse responsibility and power when a democratic process offers it to us is illogical and improper. But we have neither democracy nor power in this Constitution; the illogicality and contradiction lie in the Constitution itself. Are we to twist and distort ourselves to fit in with this perversion? Therefore whatever else we might do that spirit of non-cooperation and struggle against British imperialism must pervade our efforts.

Many of you are eager and desirous of doing something to relieve the burdens of our masses, to help the peasant and the worker and the vast numbers of middle class unemployed. Who does not want to do that? No one likes conflict and obstruction, and we have hungered so long for real opportunities for serving our people through constructive effort. They cry aloud for succour, these unhappy millions of our countrymen, and even when their voices are silent, their dumb eyes are eloquent with appeal. It is difficult to live in this country surrounded by this human desolation and misery, unspoken often and the harder to bear because of that. We talk of Swaraj and independence, but in human terms it means relief to the masses from their unutterable sorrow and misery. Ultimately all that we work for resolves itself into that. And if we have a chance to give such relief even in a small measure, we cannot reject it.

But that relief must be for the millions, not for a few odd individuals. And if we think in terms of those millions, what relief does this new Constitution offer? I have read its relevant clauses again and again, ever with a growing astonishment at the audacity of those who have framed it and thrust it on us, protecting all those who needed no protection, confirming their privileged position as exploiters, binding us hand and foot not to touch them in any way, and leaving the masses of India to sink deeper in the quicksands of poverty. We cannot give adequate relief to the masses within the scope of this Constitution; that is a demonstrable impossibility. We cannot build any new social structure so long as special privileges and vested interests surround us and suffocate us. We cannot carry out any policy, political, economic, social, educational or any other, when the whole executive agency and civil service is not subject to our control, and we may not touch the major part of the revenues. The "special powers and responsibilities" of the Governors and the Governor-General apart, the Act by itself is more than sufficient to disable any minister.

But we can do some other things. We can take upon ourselves the odium and responsibility of keeping the imperialist structure functioning, we can become indirectly responsible for the repression of our own comrades, we can take away the initiative from the masses and tone down their fine temper which we ourselves have helped in building up. All this may happen if we follow the path of least resistance and gradually adapt ourselves to existing conditions. I do not think that this will happen for the temper of

the Congress and the people will not allow it. We have gone too far for that.

Thus we do not seek the working of the new Constitution but the most suitable way of meeting and creating deadlocks, which are inevitable in this scheme of things, and of carrying on our struggle for freedom.

I can see no flaw in my reasoning, if the premises of the Congress resolutions are accepted, as accept them we must. Whatever the A. I. C. C. may decide on this question of office acceptance, we shall have to carry on the spirit and letter of those resolutions, in the legislatures as well as outside.

Our decisions must be all India decisions, for it would be fatal to have variations in policy to suit the minor needs of provinces. The unity of India has to be maintained; so also the unity of our struggle against imperialism. Danger lurks in provinces acting separately and being induced to parley separately. Therefore, as I conceive it, the chief virtue of this Convention, now or later, is to keep this all India character of our work in the legislatures ever in the forefront and to prevent fissiparous tendencies and the development of provincialism. A necessary counterpart of this is the maintenance of a uniform discipline among Congress members of all legislatures. Every effort is likely to be made on the part of our opponents to affect breaches in that discipline and all India policy, but we must realise that without that self-imposed discipline and uniformity, our strength goes and we become isolated

groups and individuals, ignored and crushed in turn by our opponents.

The wider policy that will govern us must inevitably come from the Congress and that policy must be loyally carried out by this Convention and its members. What other functions the Convention will perform will be laid down by the All-India Congress Committee and I do not wish to prejudge the issue in this written message of mine. But I can conceive the Convention or its representatives not only doing what I have mentioned above, but in times of national or international crisis playing an important role in our struggle for power and freedom.

You will soon go back to your provinces and constituencies and explain to our comrades there the decisions taken here in Delhi city, and prepare for the new forms of struggle that await you. We have some experience of this struggle for freedom and many of us have given the best part of our lives to it, and a variation in its shape or form will not deter us. But we must hold to our old anchor and not be swept away by passing currents. And we must remember that we live in a dynamic world where almost everybody expects sudden and violent change and catastrophe. That crisis, national or international, may seize us by the throat unawares sooner than we imagine. So we must be ever ready for it, and we may not think or act in terms of static or slow-moving periods.

Our next task is the *hartal* of April 1st, and on that day I hope you will be in your constituencies

to take part in that mighty demonstration against this slave Constitution and to declare again, with millions of our countrymen, that this Constitution must be scrapped and must give place to another, framed by a Constituent Assembly and based on the sovereignty of the people of India.

Allahabad

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU.

March 12, 1937.

All-India States' Peoples' Conference

Resolutions

**Feb. 1939
Ludhiana**

ALL INDIA STATES' PEOPLES' CONFERENCE.

Text of Resolutions Passed at the Sixth Session held at Ludhiana under the Presidency of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on 15th, 16th and 17th Feb. 1939:—

RESOLUTION. NO. 1.

WORK OF THE CONFERENCE

This Conference welcomes the great awakening among the peoples of the States all over India and the progress made by them in their struggle for responsible government and establishment of civil liberty. It sends its greetings to all those carrying on this struggle and expresses its solidarity with them.

The Conference further desires to express its appreciation of and its gratitude to the National Congress and its leaders, especially Mahatma Gandhi, for the lead they have given in the struggle of the States' people and for the part they are taking in conducting them. In view of the development of this struggle and the Congress Policy in regard to it, the time has come when this struggle should be co-ordinated with the wider struggle for Indian Independence, of which it is an integral part. Such an integrated all-India struggle must necessarily be carried on under the guidance of the Congress and this Conference gladly pledges its loyal co-operation in it.

This Conference, therefore, directs and authorises its Working Committee, which in future should be called the Standing Committee, to endeavour by every means to co-ordinate this struggle in close co-operation with and under the guidance of National Congress or any sub-committee that the Congress might form for this purpose.

This Committee will publish books, pamphlets and journals dealing with the problems of the States and will carry on other activities necessary for the attainment of the objects of the Conference. This Committee is authorised to open a Research Department for States' problems and to gather materials for the effective carrying on of its activities.

RESOLUTION NO. 2.

STANDING COMMITTEE

In view of the fact that the Council of the Conference practically consists of the Conference itself and has not separately met since Karachi, and further in view of the development of the struggle necessitating rapid decision, a Standing Committee of 15, with power to co-opt six additional members should function as the executive of the conference. A larger council, when it is considered necessary, should be formed directly by the constituent organisations of the Conference.

The Standing Committee is authorised to frame rules for this purpose when necessity arises.

RESOLUTION. NO. 3.

INDIAN STATES SYSTEM

This Conference feels that the Indian States' system is completely out of date, semi-feudal and an obstruction to the progress and advancement of the people. Autocracy as embodied in the system has long ceased to exist in every part of the world, and the progress made by the rest of India demands the liquidation of the Indian States' system. The close association of this system with British Imperialism involves a danger to all people of India and in the interests of the whole India it is urgently necessary to put an end to this association and to make vital changes in the system. These

changes must necessarily be in the form of responsible government. The Conference desires to point out to all the Rulers of the States that the establishment of responsible government in the States is not only in keeping with the spirit of the times and the natural aspirations of their people but also provides for them a position of influence and dignity above contention and strife. It is, therefore, to their interest to issue unequivocal declarations of their decision to establish full responsible government and immediately to bring the system of the administration to the level with that prevailing in the rest of India. Attempts to delay this inevitable development are likely to lead to grave and disastrous consequences and the Conference appeals to the Princes to avoid these perils by lining themselves with their people.

RESOLUTION NO. 4.

CONSTRUCTIVE WORK

This Conference while appreciating the political awakening in the people of numerous States all over India and the efforts of all the public workers in the States to rouse in the masses a sense of their political and economic rights, calls upon the public workers to organise constructive work particularly in the villages such as spinning and weaving, prohibition, village sanitation, communal unity, medical relief, literacy drive etc. so as to establish mass contact and secure the confidence of the peasants and workers.

RESOLUTION NO. 5.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE RAJAH OF AUNDH

This Conference congratulates the Rajah Saheb of Aundh on the voluntary, sincere and bold step taken by him

in granting a constitution eminently suitable to small states such as his guaranteeing Responsible Government to the people, and records its admiration for and appreciation of the public admission of his position as the first "servant of his people", thus setting a worthy example to the Rulers of other States in India.

RESOLUTION NO. 6.

AMALGAMATION OF SMALLER STATES

It is the considered opinion of the Conference that only those States which have a population exceeding 20 Lakhs souls or Revenue exceeding 50 Lakhs rupees can maintain the standard of administration necessary and suitable for being workable units for the purpose of uniting with the provinces in a scheme of a Free and Federated India and, therefore, all States not coming within the above category should be amalgamated, either singly or by groups, with the neighbouring Provinces for the purpose of administration, with suitable provisions for the reasonable rights and privileges of the rulers concerned, and this Conference, therefore, requests the National Congress to appoint a Committee of Enquiry for the purpose of finding ways and means to facilitate such an amalgamation.

RESOLUTION NO. 7.

FOREIGN JURISDICTION ORDER-IN-COUNCIL

This Conference strongly protests against the recent notifications issued by the Governor-General in Council in exercise of powers conferred on him by Foreigners' Jurisdiction Order in Council 1937 authorising the Residents of Western India and the Gujarat States' Agencies to exercise powers under the Indian States Protection Act of 1935 and also all sections of the penal code including Section 124-A, modify-

ing it so as to include sedition against States; the Conference draws attention of the Bombay Government and other Provincial Governments concerned to this unwarranted encroachment upon their ordinary powers by virtue of the Foreigners' Jurisdiction Order-In-Council, thereby assuming powers to issue notifications which are in the nature of ordinances.

RESOLUTION NO. 8.

SERFDOM IN SIMLA HILL STATES

This conference strongly condemns the several tyrannical and inhuman practices such as serfdom known as Chobandi, forced labour and begar, athawara, prabhu-seva, extortionate demands of money in the form of pantoti etc., prevailing in several Punjab and Simla Hill States. such as Tehri-Garhwal, Sirmoor, Bushir, Jubal, Balsau, Baghal, Kuthar and others inspite of repeated warnings of the political authorities and insists that the practice will cease forthwith.

RESOLUTION NO. 9.

CONDITIONS IN TRAVANCORE

This Conference deeply deplores the utter silence of the Travancore Durbar in not following up the release of prisoners and the withdrawal by the T. S. Congress of its allegations against the Dewan by the investigation of the shootings in the course of the movement and by the appointment of a committee to explore the best way of establishing Responsible Government in the State. The State Congress will be justified in restarting Satyagrah in the event of the Travancore Government persisting in the present policy of declining to grant their demands, especially in view of the fact that there are still three hundred persons in jail.

RESOLUTION NO. 10.

CONDOLENCE RESOLUTION

This Conference deeply deplores the loss sustained by the States' people by the premature demise of Sjt. Manishanker Trivedi, General Secretary of the All India States' Peoples' Conference, whose life was a noble example of service and whose sudden death, while in harness, was an equally noble example of sacrifice. The Conference further mourns the death of Sjt. Manilal Kothari, a stalwart and pioneer in the cause of the States' people and places on record its appreciation of the services rendered by the late lamented leader.

This Conference has heard with deep sorrow of the sudden death last night at Poona of Syt. A. V. Patvardhan, the Provincial Secretary for Maharashtra and indefatigable worker in the cause of the States' people. It sends its heart felt condolences to the family of Syt. Patvardhan whose name will be long remembered as that of a pioneer as well as a veteran of the freedom movement in the Indian States. The Conference also expresses its sorrow at the death of Swami Gopal Das of the Bikaner Conspiracy Case and S. Bhagat Singh, President of the Patiala Praja Mandal, Tek Chand Jain of Jhabua and Pandit Shamlalji Vakil of Hyderabad (Deccan).

RESOLUTION NO. 11.

STRUGGLE IN RAJKOT

(a) This Conference congratulates the brave people of Rajkot on their heroic struggle against the system of autocracy in the State and for the attainment of Responsible Government and emphatically condemns the gross breach by the Thakore Saheb, presumably under pressure of the local Agent of the Paramount Power, of the deliberate agreement made with Sardar Vallababhai Patel as the acknowledged

representative of the people of the State. This Conference further appreciates the spirit of sacrifice and suffering which the people of Rajkot have shown throughout their valiant fight carried on in a perfectly disciplined and non-violent manner and wishes them success in their attempt to achieve Responsible Government.

(b) The Conference views with grave concern the unwarranted interference of the Paramount Power in the internal affairs of the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot and his people, and considers that such interference must necessarily lead to grave consequences.

RESOLUTION NO. 12.

CONDITIONS IN JAIPUR

This Conference protests against the laws and administrative practices of the Jaipur Government which deny to the people the elementary liberties of meeting and association and under which the activities of the Jaipur Praja Mandal and the entry of Seth Jamnalal Bajaj into his homeland are prohibited. This Conference congratulates the people of Jaipur on their brave resistance to these laws and appreciates the resolve of the Jaipur Prajamandal to offer continued satyagraha till they obtain their civil liberties and wishes them an early and effective success. This Conference condemns the vicious lathi charge made on peaceful citizens by the Jaipur authorities and the manner in which Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, president of the Praja Mandal, was twice deported and interned for the third time.

RESOLUTION NO. 13.

CONDITIONS IN KASHMIR

This Conference expresses its solidarity with the people of Jammu and Kashmir State in their struggle for Responsible

Government and gives its support to their national demand which embodies changes in political and constitutional liberties which are immediately necessary.

The Conference is of opinion that the recent constitutional changes, announced by the State authorities, are entirely unsatisfactory and do not make any essential difference in the present constitutional structure of the State which continues to be irresponsible. Further the policy of the State in continuing its policy of repression indicates that there is no essential difference in the attitude of the State towards the movement for freedom and responsible government. This Conference in particular condemns Notification No. 19L which in effect normalises a state of Martial Law in the State and enacts the rule of Military and Police. This notification confers powers of arrest and internment of political workers by sub-inspectors of police and military officers, powers of search without warrant, of confiscation of property, of flogging of political workers, fines and long terms of imprisonment without proper trial. Such an enactment is an offence to all civilised canons of legislation and government.

RESOLUTION NO. 14.

USE OF FORCE BY PARAMOUNT POWER

A) This Conference strongly condemns the use of force by the Paramount Power in its attempt to support the Princes in resisting the legitimate aspirations of the people by lending the use of Imperial troops and Agency police. The obligation to protect the Ruler under the Sannads cannot be one-sided and can never justify the use of coercive methods to crush the legitimate and peaceful movements of the people of the States for the assertion of their birth-right of Responsible Government.

B) While the Conference deeply regrets the death of Major Bazaalgette at Ranpur under circumstances which are

sub-judice at present, and condemns all similar manifestation of mass fury which are bound to retard the peoples' march to progress, the Conference desires to condemn strongly the reign of terror that prevails at present in some of the States of Orissa, the atrocities that are reported to have followed, the British troops in Dhenkanal, the exodus of more than 25,000 of Talcher, the practical desertion of Ranpur by the people, deliberate breach of the agreement arrived at between the Ruler and ruled in Niligiri, and the banning of the Prajamandal in Hindol in the wake of its much advertised reforms, all in Orissa, where the Princes are bound to rule under the terms of the Sannads with advice of the political officers, which serve to show that the Paramount Power has decided to resort to the use of Force in putting down the mass awakening in the States where the people are living under the most wretched conditions of life.

This Conference desires to convey to the oppressed people of Orissa its full sympathy and support in this their hour of trial.

RESOLUTION NO. 15.

CIVIL LIBERTIES

The Conference deplores the unabating continuance in the leading states in India, not to mention numerous minor states, of repressive and reactionary measures tending to curtail the civil liberties of the people, denying their fundamental rights such as:

In Gwalior circular No. 1 Samwat 1987, the special powers conferred on the I. G. P. regarding deportation without enquiry or trial, the Societies Registration Act by which any Society working for the promotion of national

and social uplift requires compulsory Registration but is not generally registered.

In Indore the Public Meeting Act prohibiting outsiders from addressing meetings without previous permission, suppression of labour through ordinance rule, deportation of public workers.

In Jodhpur, Sedition Act, Press Act, Notification of 1932, Type-Writers Act and the banning of the hoisting of the National Flag.

In Jaipur Public Meetings Notification, Public Association's Registration etc;

In Bikaner Public Safety Act and externment orders against Sjt. Satyanarayan Saraf and others,

In Malerkotla promulgation of Sec. 144 prohibiting the States' Peoples' Conference in the State,

In Bharatpur the Public Safety Act;

In Alwar, the Public Meetings, Notification of the press and the Societies Registration, Criminal Law Amendment Act.

In Junagadh, the Foreigners Act and the banning of the State Praja Mandal.

In Gondal, Wankaner, Morvi and Jetpur Public Meetings Notifications.

In Kolhapur, the Press Act and banning of public meetings and processions under Sec. 144.

In Rajkot and Limbdi, the prevalent reign of terror and goondaism,

In Sirohi, the Public Meetings Notification,

In Karoli, the circular prohibiting Kathas, the distribution of hand-bills, and the holding of Panchayat without permission.

In Bhopal, Public Meetings Notification, Press Act and the prohibition of processions,

In Dhar, the undesirable Aliens' Act.

In Bundi, the Public Meetings Notification.

In Kishan Garh. Suppression of labour organizations, confiscation of jahagirs, dismissal of Lumbedars and Zaildars and false prosecution of public workers,

In Nabha, prosecution and imprisonment of S. Hardittsingh, president of Nabha Praja Mandal, L. Sant Ram Vakil, and the continued externment of about 25 families from the state for the last 16 years and Sec. 10 (c) of Nabha Notification 1988 Sammat under the order of the Council of Regency,

In Akkalkot and Savnur, entry of public workers,

In Janjira and Jawhar Mandi, prohibition of public meetings.

In Patiala and Zind, Ordinance of 1932 prohibiting the working of Public Associations and deportation of public workers,

Tehri Garhwal and Sirmore; Registration Act for Association, prohibition against public meetings.

In Mandi, Public Safety Act, prohibition against Political meetings and Association and declaration of Praja Mandal as unlawful,

In Kapurthala, ban against starting of newspapers;

In Faridkot, Registration of Association Act, prohibiting public workers from attending All India States' People's Conference,

And in Chamba, Public Meetings Notifications and forced labour.

RESOLUTION No. 16.

STRUGGLE IN HYDERABAD

(a) This Conference notes with deep regret the exceptionally backward and reactionary position occupied by the Hyderabad State in respect of the civil rights and popular liberties of the people, the rights of organization and assembly being practically non-existent and any independent public life being rendered impossible. The ban on the State Congress, which came in the way even of its formation, Gashti No. 53, especially in its new and aggravated form and the Public Safety Act prevent the exercise of the most elementary and basic personal and civil liberties. This ban on the State Congress has been continued even after the suspension of satyagraha by it, and about 400 satyagrahis of the State Congress are still in prison.

(b) The Conference congratulates the State Congress upon the discipline and orderliness uniformly displayed by it in conducting the satyagraha movement in the State, both in respect of starting and suspending it.

(c) The Conference is of opinion that the well-established principle of freedom of faith and religious worship has not been observed by the State authorities and is impeded by regulations and, more particularly, by the practice in the State, and the desire to have these impediments removed is by no means communal and is wholly legitimate. The Conference trusts that all these restrictions will be removed and religious freedom fully observed in regard to all religious communities. The Conference is, however, of opinion that the satyagraha started with the object of getting these religious disabilities removed is inopportune, as it tends to have communal repercussions and gives a pretext to the State authorities to oppose the larger movement for Responsible Government.

(d) The Conference trusts that the Hyderabad Government will remove the ban on the State Congress as well as other impediments to the full exercise of civil liberty. In the event of the Government persisting in its present policy, a resumption of satyagraha by the State Congress for the establishment of fundamental rights and political liberty might become inevitable.

RESOLUTION NO 17.

TREATY RIGHTS

Whereas great stress has been laid on the old Treaties between the British Power and the States and attempts have been made to use these Treaties to perpetuate autocracy and the semi-feudal order which has so long prevailed in the States and to obstruct the progress of the people, it is necessary to point out the real character of these Treaties, the manner and circumstances under which they were made, the person who made them, and the interpretations placed on them in later years. Out of 562 states in India only forty have such Treaties, and these were usually made after a conflict between the officers or agents of the East India Company and persons who had no status of independence, but who had come to exercise authority over part of the country, after the collapse of the central authority in India, which resulted from the fall of the Mughal Empire. The Treaties were made without any reference to or regard for the people and applied to the then existing circumstances. Gradually, as these circumstances changed they ceased to have any importance, and many of them were ignored or even completely abrogated long ago by the practice of the Political Department of the Government of India, which varied and developed with the changing policy of the Paramount Power. In any event, the Treaties made over a century ago cannot be considered binding on the people of the States at a time when conditions

have entirely changed. The Treaties are now used by the Paramount Power to intervene in the struggle for freedom in the the States in favour of the Rulers, and the obligation of this Power to protect the people from misrule and oppression is ignored.

This Conference is strongly of opinion that these Treaties should be forthwith ended as being completely out of date and inapplicable to present conditions, and it calls upon the Paramount Power to refuse help or protection to those Rulers who decline to put an end to misrule and who attempt to crush the movement for freedom in these States.

RESOLUTION NO. 18.

CONDITIONS IN MEWAR

This Conference records its indignant protest against the high-handed action of the Mewar Police in arresting Sjt. Maneklal Verma in Deoli within the jurisdiction of Ajmer Merwara and forcibly kidnapping him from that jurisdiction and appeals to the Local Government of Ajmer-Merwara to take prompt legal action against the Police concerned and political action against the Mewar Darbar for this flagrant violation of British administered territory and demands his immediate restoration to liberty.

This Conference congratulates the people of Mewar (Udaipur) on carrying on a heroic struggle for civil liberties and strongly condemns the policy of the Mewar Government in sending more than a hundred citizens to jail and subjecting them to illtreatment. It further condemns the lathi charge resorted to at Nathdwara and several other places on peaceful crowds including women and children and demands immediate release of these civil resistadce prisoners and withdrawal of notification declaring Mewar Raj Praja Mandal unlawful.

RESOLUTION NO. 19.

REVISION OF THE CONSTITUTION

This Conference authorises the Standing Committee to frame a revised draft constitution for the Conference and to circulate it amongst its constituent bodies and invite suggestions within a fixed time and after considering the draft in the light of the suggestions received, prepare the final draft and adopt it before the end of May 1939.

The constitution so adopted shall be deemed to be in force till approved by the next session of the conference.

RESOLUTION NO. 20.

CONDITIONS IN THE PUNJAB STATES

(a) This Conference deplores the backward conditions of the States in the Punjab, notably Nabha, Patiala, Shirgor, Kalsai, Malerkotla, Faridkot and Bhawalpore, and condemns the repression of the people that has been carried on in these States of which many extraordinary and barbarous instances have been placed before the Conference. Civil liberties are ruthlessly crushed and numerous restrictions have been imposed on public activities. The Conference appeals to the people of the Punjab States to organise themselves for the vindication of their rights.

(b) This Conference considers that the personnel and the terms of reference of the Reforms Committees appointed by the States of Patiala and Kapurthala as unsatisfactory and inadequate. In view of the constitution of these committees, it is unlikely that the schemes of reforms formulated by them will meet the approval of the peoples of the States concerned. Any such schemes, in order to be acceptable to the people, should be based on the principle of the Responsible Government and should be framed by a committee on which the local Prajamandals are predominantly represented.

RESOLUTION NO. 21.

PERSONNEL OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

1. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru—President.
2. Balwantrao Mehta.
3. Jayanarayan Vyas.
4. Rangildas Kapadia. } —Secretaries.
5. Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya.
6. Sheikh Mohamed Abdulla (Kashmir).
7. Krishna Sarma (Hyderabad)
8. Master Hari Singh M. L. A. (Punjab)
9. Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia (Jaipur)
10. Kanaiyalal Vaidya (Central India)
11. Satyanarayan Saraf (Bikaner)
12. Syed Talib Husain (Bhopal)
13. Lala Shanker Lal (Patiala)
14. S. Shamsher Singh (Punjab)
15. Durlabhji Umedchand (Kathiawar), Treasurer.

The quorum shall be of 7 members.

The members absenting themselves at two consecutive meetings shall be disqualified. Their absence on grounds of ill-health or being in jail or some such cogent reasons, however, will not lead to such disqualification.

Issues of

LIFE AND DEATH

"Issues of life and death importance await decision and demand of us carefully planned and concerted action;" said the Chancellor of the Princes' Chamber addressing a meeting of Princes and Ministers recently at Bombay.

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All-India States' Peoples' Conference

February 1939, Ludhiana

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Comrades,

Year after year this Conference of the people of the Indian States has met in session and discussed the problems of the States. Year after year it has raised its voice in condemnation of the autocracy and misrule, the corruption and the degradation that has prevailed in many of these States. The labours of this Conference, and far more so of the National Congress, have borne fruit and today there is a mighty awakening among the people of the States. When, in after years, the history of India comes to be written, the year 1938 will stand out as the year of this awakening. The historian of that distant future will not wonder at this awakening; but he will marvel that the millions who inhabit the Indian States submitted for generations to intolerable and appalling conditions, and that a system of government which had long vanished in other parts of the world still continued in India.

The year 1938 has become history and we stand on the threshold of 1939. The movement for freedom gathers pace and the whole of India looks with sympathy and understanding on this great struggle in the States. At this vital moment you have summoned me to this Conference and I have gladly come at your bidding. I come to you not only because I am intensely interested in the freedom of the people of the States, but as the bearer of the goodwill of the rest of India and as a pledge of our solidarity.

Many people have in past years criticised the attitude of the National Congress towards the States

and heated argument has taken place about intervention and non-intervention. That criticism and argument have perished with the yesterday that has gone and are meaningless today. Yet it is worthwhile to consider briefly the development of Congress policy in regard to the States. I have not always approved of all the expressions of this policy or liked the emphasis on certain aspects of the problem. But I am convinced that this fundamental policy was the correct one under the circumstances, and indeed subsequent events have justified it completely. A policy aiming at vital change or revolution must keep in touch with reality and the conditions that prevail. As these conditions change, that policy changes. Brave words and gestures or strongly-worded resolutions, out of touch with objective conditions, do not bring about that pregnant atmosphere out of which revolutionary change is born. Nor can that condition be created artificially or mass movements launched unless the masses themselves are ready and prepared. The Congress realised this and knew of the unpreparedness of people in the States; it husbanded its energy in the struggle outside, well realising that this was the most effective method of influencing the States' peoples and making them ready for their own struggle.

The Haripura resolution was a landmark in the evolution of Congress policy and it enunciated this in clear language. The integrity and unity of India was an essential part of the independence we worked for, and the same full measure of political, social and economic freedom was to come to the States as to the rest of India. There could be no compromise on this, and the Congress declared afresh in favour of full responsible government and the guarantee of civil liberty in the States. Further it declared to be its right and privilege to work for the attainment of these

objectives in the States. There was no question of non-intervention; the Congress as representing the will of the Indian people, recognises no bars which limit its freedom of activity in any matter pertaining to India and her people. It is its right and privilege and its duty to intervene in any such matter whenever the interests of India demand it. Not to do so would be to deny its own function and to betray the cause which it seeks to represent.

But it is for the Congress and the people of India to determine when and where they will intervene and what policy they must pursue, so that their intervention might be effective and fruitful of results. The limitation, if any, is of its own making, or is caused by external circumstances which it is wise enough to recognise. No outside authority can limit the function of the Congress, just as no power or authority can set bounds to the aspirations or advancement of the Indian people.

The Congress knew well that the backwardness of the States hindered our national progress and that there could be no freedom for India unless the States ceased to be what they were. The Congress was eager to bring about this essential and vital change, and yet it knew that the change could only come about from below, when the people of the States grew self-reliant and organised and capable of shouldering the burden of their struggle. It emphasized this. Not to have done so would have been to mislead and encourage vain delusion, and delay the building up in the States themselves of organisations which would represent the strength and will of the people.

The wisdom of the Congress stands amply justified today when we see the developments that have taken place since Haripura. All the States are astir and in many of them powerful mass movements are

functioning. The people of the States are rapidly coming into line with the rest of India; they are no longer a burden and a dead-weight keeping us back. They are setting the pace for India today and our national politics are dominated by their struggle. The time has come therefore for the integration of these various struggles in the States *inter se* and with the major struggle against British Imperialism. There are no longer many different struggles going on for independence; there is only one mighty struggle for India's freedom, though its aspects may vary and though its battle-grounds may be many. As Gandhiji has said, the struggle for liberty, whenever it takes place, is a struggle for all India.

It is in the fitness of things that at this moment of vital crisis for the States, India's leader, ever thinking of her freedom and jealous of her honour, should step out and in his ringing voice of old, that we remember so well, give faith and courage to our people. Gandhiji's lead has finally settled all the old arguments that obscured the issue, and that issue stands out now, clear and definite.

There are about six hundred States in India—big ones and small ones and tiny ones which one cannot even place on the map. They differ greatly among themselves and some have advanced industrially and educationally, and some have had competent Rulers or ministers. The majority of them, however, are sinks of reaction and incompetence and untrained autocratic power, sometimes exercised by vicious and degraded individuals. But whether the Ruler happens to be good or bad, or his ministers competent or incompetent, the evil lies in the system. This system has vanished from the rest of the world and, left to itself, it would have vanished from India also long ago. But in spite of its manifest decay and

stagnation, it has been propped up and artificially maintained by British Imperialism. Offspring of the British Power in India, suckled by imperialism for its own purposes, it has survived till today, though mighty revolutions have shaken the world and changed it, empires have collapsed and crowds of princes and petty rulers have faded away. That system has no inherent importance or strength, it is the strength of British Imperialism that counts. For us in India that system has in reality been one of the faces of imperialism. Therefore when conflict comes we must recognise who our opponent is.

We are told now of the so-called independence of the States and of their treaties with the Paramount Power, which are sacrosanct and inviolable and apparently must go on for ever and ever. We have recently seen what happens to international treaties and the most sacred of covenants when they do not suit the purposes of imperialism. We have seen these treaties torn up, friends and allies basely deserted and betrayed and the pledged word broken by England and France. Democracy and freedom were the sufferers and so it did not matter. But when reaction and autocracy and imperialism stand to lose, it does matter, and treaties, however moth-eaten and harmful to the people they might be, have to be preserved. It is a monstrous imposition to be asked to put up with these treaties of a century and a quarter ago, in the making of which the people had no voice or say. It is fantastic to expect the people to keep on their chains of slavery, imposed upon them by force and fraud, and to submit to a system which crushes the life-blood out of them. We recognise no such treaties and we shall in no event accept them. The only final authority and paramount power that we recognise is the will of the people, and

the only thing that counts ultimately is the good of the people.

A new theory of the independence of the States has been advanced in recent years, and it has been advanced by the very Power that holds them in an iron grip and keeps them in subjection. Neither history nor constitutional law give any justification for this, and if we examine the origins of these States, most of their rulers would be reduced to the status of feudal barons. But we need not trouble ourselves with legal research, as the practice and facts are plain enough. This practice has been for the British Power to dominate these States completely, and its slightest gesture is a command to them which they disobey at their peril. The Political Department of the Government of India pulls the strings and the puppets dance to its tune; the local Resident is the master of the situation; and latterly the practice has grown of British officials being imposed as ministers of the Rulers of the States. If this is independence then it will be interesting to learn how it differs from the most abject subjection.

There is no independence in the States and there is going to be none, for it is hardly possible geographically and it is entirely opposed to the conception of a united free India. It is conceivable and desirable in the case of the larger States for them to have a great deal of autonomy within the framework of an Indian federation. But they will have to remain integral parts of India and the major matters of common concern must be controlled by a democratic federal centre. Internally they will have responsible government.

It is clear that the problem of the States would be easy of solution if the conflict was confined to the people and the Ruler. Many of the Rulers, left to themselves would ultimately line themselves with the people, and if they hesitated to do so, the pressure

from below would soon induce them to change their minds. Not to do so would imperil their position and the only alternative would be complete removal. The Congress and the various Praja Mandals have so far made every effort to induce the Rulers to side with their people and establish responsible government. They must realise that for them not to agree to do so will not stop the coming of freedom to their people; their opposition will only place an insurmountable barrier between them and their people, and an arrangement between the two will then become exceedingly difficult. The map of the world has changed many times during the last hundred years; empires have ceased to be and new countries have arisen. Even now before our very eyes we see this map changing. It requires no prophet to say with confidence that the Indian States system is doomed even as the British Empire, which has so long protected it, is doomed. It is the path of prudence as well as of wisdom for the Rulers to line themselves with their people and be sharers with them in the new freedom, and instead of being despotic and disliked rulers, with a precarious tenure, to be proud and equal citizens of a great commonwealth.

A few of the Rulers of the States have realised this and have taken some steps in the right direction. One of them, the Raja of Aundh, Chief of a small State, has distinguished himself by his wisdom in granting responsible government to his people, and in doing so with grace and goodwill:

But, unhappily, most of them stick to their old ways and show no signs of change. They demonstrate afresh the lesson of history that when a class has fulfilled its purpose and the world has no need of it, it decays and loses wisdom and all capacity. It cannot adapt itself to changing conditions. In a vain

attempt to hold on to what is fading away, it loses even what little it might have retained. The British ruling classes have had a long and brilliant career and throughout the nineteenth century and after, they dominated the world. Yet today we see them nerveless, witless, incapable of consecutive thought or action, and in a frantic attempt to hold on to some vested interests, ruining their great position in the world and shattering the proud edifice of their empire. It is even so with classes that have fulfilled their function and outlived their utility. If the British ruling classes are manifestly failing, in spite of their prestige and tradition and training, what shall we say of our Indian Princes who for generations past have grown up in decadence and irresponsibility? The problems of government require something more than a knowledge of how to manage polo-ponies, or recognise the breeds of dogs, or have the skill to kill large numbers of inoffensive animals.

But even if the Rulers of the States were willing, their willingness would not take them far. For the master of their immediate destiny is the agent of the British Government and they dare not offend him. We have seen in the case of Rajkot how a Ruler who was inclined to come to terms with his people was threatened with deposition, and how later he was made to break his word under pressure from British agents.

Thus the conflict in the States is only incidentally with the Rulers. In effect it is with British Imperialism. That is the issue, clear and definite. And that is why the interference of the British Power in the States against the people has a special significance. We see this on an increasing scale, not only by the Political Department of the Government of India and its many Agents and Residents, but through its armed forces, as in Orissa. This interference in order

to crush the popular movement is no longer going to be tolerated by us. The National Congress will certainly intervene with full vigour if the Government of India intervene to crush the people. Our methods are different; they are peaceful, but they have been shown in the past to be effective.

Gandhiji has repeatedly warned the British Government and its agents in India of the far-reaching consequences of this conflict. It is manifestly impossible for the conflict to be confined to particular States and for the Congress, at the same time, to carry on provincial administrations involving a measure of cooperation with the British authorities. If there is this major conflict then its effects will spread to the remotest corners of India, and the question will no longer be a limited one of this State or that, but of the complete elimination of British Power.

What is the nature of the conflict today? This must be clearly understood. It varies slightly from State to State, but the demand everywhere is for full responsible government. Yet the conflict is not at present to enforce that demand, but to establish the right of organising people for that demand. When this right is denied and civil liberties are crushed, no way is left open to the people to carry on what are called constitutional methods of agitation. Their choice then is either to submit and give up all political and even public activity, and to suffer a degradation of the spirit and a continuation of the tyranny that oppresses them, or to resort to direct action. This direct action, according to our code, is perfectly peaceful *Satyagraha* and a refusal to submit to violence and evil, whatever the consequences. The immediate issue today is thus one of civil liberties in most of the States, though the objective everywhere is responsible government. In Jaipur the issue is in a sense

still more limited for the State government objects to the Praja Mandal organising famine relief.

Members of the British Government, in justifying their international policy, tell us frequently of their love of peace and their horror of the methods of force and violence in the solution of international or national problems. In the name of peace and appeasement, they have helped and encouraged international blackmail and gangsterism of the worst type and done mortal injury to democracy and freedom in Europe. By their policy they have enthroned the rule of unabashed violence in Europe and been parties to the greatest tragedy of our time—the defeat of the Republic of Spain, which has fought so magnificently and so long against overwhelming odds. Yet these Statesmen of Britain talk of the virtues of peaceful settlement and of the wickedness of force and violence. These pious sentiments are applied by them in Europe so that the forces of reaction and violence might have a free field and an ample opportunity to crush freedom.

What do we see in India and especially in the States? All attempts by us at peaceful propaganda, peaceful organisation, peaceful settlement are met by the brutal violence of the State authorities backed by the armed might and political influence of the British Power. Thus where changes are sought, howsoever legitimately and peacefully, in the direction of democracy and freedom, all such attempts must be put down ruthlessly and with violence. But where changes are desired by fascism and imperialism in their own interests and in order to crush democracy and freedom, then violence and force are allowed full play, and the policy of peace is only meant to obstruct and hinder those who want to preserve their liberties.

Does any one still hold that tyranny and auto-

cracy and corrupt administration must continue in the States? Does any one deny that all these must go and give place to free institutions? If so, how is this change to be brought about normally unless full opportunities are given for peaceful organisation and the development of an intelligent and self-reliant public opinion? The full establishment of civil liberties is an essential preliminary to any progress. It is an insult to India to ask her to tolerate in the States ordinance rule and the suppression of organisations and prevention of public gatherings and methods usually associated with the gangster. Are the States to remain vast prisons where the human spirit is sought to be extinguished and the resources of the people are to be used for the pageantry and luxury of courts, while the masses starve and remain illiterate and backward? Are the middle ages to continue in India under the protection of British Imperialism?

In an important State in Rajputana even typewriters are discouraged and there is an ordinance dealing with them and requiring their registration. In Kashmir a monstrous ordinance, framed on the lines of the ordinance promulgated for the Burma rebellion some years ago, is the permanent law of the State. In the premier State of Hyderabad civil liberty has long been non-existent and latterly accounts of brutal ill-treatment of peaceful satyagrahis have seen the light of day. The recent expulsion of hundreds of students from the Osmania University for the offence of singing *Bande Mataram* privately is an astounding instance of the reactionary mentality which prevails in the governing circles of Hyderabad. In Travancore the memory of the outrages of last summer is still fresh in our minds.

But I do not wish to make a list of these States and their misdeeds, nor do I wish to discuss the prob-

lems of individual States. If I attempted to do so this address of mine would never end. Here, where we meet, the Punjab States lie close to us and many of them have long had an unsavoury reputation. Their tale of misgovernment, if we heard it fully, would fill our time. But, apart from the difficulties of time and space, I would prefer that you concentrated your attention on the wider problem which embraces all the States, which is in effect the Indian State problem, rather than lose ourselves in the mazes of each separate problem. We must see the wood and not get lost in the trees. We must realise, and we must make others realise, that it is no longer possible to deal piecemeal with this great problem for the freedom of India is one and indivisible.

But some States are in the forefront today in the struggle and they must be referred to. Some are peculiarly situated and require consideration.

Rajkot and Jaipur occupy the stage today and both of them raise issues of all-India importance. Many of our comrades are there, engaged in the heat of the struggle, and have been unable to join us in this Conference because of that more important engagement. Rajkot has many lessons to teach us. After some months of conflict, it seemed that the people had won and we rejoiced. We saw how effectively the technique of our struggle and the peaceful and heroic sacrifice of the people brought success to us. But we had rejoiced too soon, and the plighted word of the Ruler was broken and the struggle had to begin afresh. All India knows how this happened and how British authority by pressure and threats came in the way of a settlement. From this we learn that we must never be misled by temporary success, we can never be sure of the triumph of our cause, till achievement has come. Promises and assurances

will not be kept, for the real power does not rest with those who make the promise. It rests with British Imperialism. In Jaipur there is an English official who, though appointed prime minister by the Maharaja, is the real ruler of State, and rules on behalf of and probably under the instructions of the Political Department of the Government of India. No one imagines that the youthful Maharaja has any important say in vital matters. No one supposes that the English prime minister could function as such for a day without the goodwill and support of the Government of India. The slightest disapproval of his policy by the Political Department would result in the immediate change of that policy or in his removal from his office.

In Orissa the regrettable murder of the British Agent, Major Bazalgette, has led, as such acts even when committed in a moment of folly, always lead to unfortunate consequences. The people of the Orissa States are backward and have to suffer for their lack of understanding of our basic principles. This act is a warning to us to conduct our movement in such a manner that the people realise its significance and adhere strictly to its policy of non-violence. For them to forget this is to injure their own cause.

The reaction of the British Power to the tragedy of Ranpur was significant. Armed forces were brought from distant parts of India and a large concentration of troops in Orissa proclaimed the might of the Paramount Power. What were these troops supposed to do? There was no rebellion, no violent aggression. The starving peasantry fled at their approach and the State of Ranpur became an uninhabited wilderness. It is said that some trouble was feared from the backward jungle tribes, the Gonds. Was the British Army in such numbers required to

face the bows and arrows of these poor backward countrymen of ours? But the Gonds have done nothing and will not do anything aggressive unless they are goaded by intolerable misery. They have to be met gently and their grievances removed. But the way of imperialism is different.

It was not the possibility of any action by the Gonds that brought the armed hosts to Orissa. The troops came to overawe the peasantry of the States and to strengthen the Rulers in opposing their demands. They were utilised to suppress the movement for freedom. This was an intervention of the most flagrant kind on behalf of the Paramount Power on the side of tyranny and corrupt administrations. Every one knows that some of the States in Orissa are the worst and most degraded of their kind in India.

Quite apart from Ranpur and long before the murder of Major Bazalgette there, the tyrannical administrations of Dhenkanal and Talchar had oppressed their people to such an extent that a great exodus had taken place from these States. From twenty to thirty thousand persons had crossed the boundaries of the States and entered the province of Orissa. A demand came from the Rulers for the extradition from the province to the States of the leaders of this exodus, so that they might be made to suffer for their opposition to the State administration. This demand was supported by the British authority. It was a demand which no Congress ministry could agree to without losing honour and betraying our comrades in the States and being false to our principles.

We do not wish to shield any one who is guilty. We are perfectly prepared for a full inquiry. But the inquiry that is needed is an inquiry into the offences and maladministration and oppression of the Dhenkanal and Talchar State governments. It is these

State authorities that should be tried for the sorrow and misery that they have brought on their people.

The governments of the major States have been apt pupils in some ways of British Imperialism. Among other things they have learnt the art of utilising communal differences to check popular movements. In Travancore a powerful people's movement is opposed and sought to be discredited on the plea that it is a communal movement, consisting mainly of Christians; in Kashmir the popular movement is called communal because it is largely Muslim in composition; in Hyderabad it is said to be communal because it is predominantly Hindu. The demands put forward on behalf of these several movements might be, as they indeed are, wholly national with no communal tinge or bias in them, but some excuse has to be found to discredit and oppose them and the plea of communalism is a useful one.

Hyderabad and Kashmir are the two premier States in India and we might have hoped that they would set an example to the other States by introducing free institutions and responsible government. Unhappily both are exceedingly backward politically and socially. Hyderabad is a predominantly Hindu State with a Muslim ruling class; Kashmir is predominantly a Muslim State with a Hindu ruling class. Both thus present the same type of problem, and both have the same background of extreme poverty among the masses, illiteracy, industrial backwardness and undeveloped resources. In painful contrast with this general poverty and wretchedness, the Rulers of both are probably the two richest individuals in India. Kashmir is slightly more advanced politically as it has a kind of legislative assembly, but this has little power, and the ordinances that obtain there are monstrous in their severity. In Hyderabad we have

probably the lowest level of civil liberty in India, and latterly attention has been drawn to the prohibition of even certain religious ceremonies. This low level in Hyderabad is not the reaction to any aggressive movement but has been for long the normal state of affairs.

It is distressing that in these two great States such conditions should prevail. It was natural that in both of them popular movements should grow up and spread to the masses. This took place in Kashmir first and later in Hyderabad. It was inevitable that such movements should affect the great majority of the population—the Muslims in Kashmir and the Hindus in Hyderabad. If, under the circumstances, they showed a certain communal tinge to begin with, it was not surprising. Even so they did not cease to be popular movements representing the urge of the masses and their objective was a national one which would bring relief and progress to all. To condemn them as communal movements was to blind oneself deliberately to the facts, and for the minority groups in either State to lend colour to this condemnation was to injure their own cause. For this meant that the minority was opposed to freedom and progress and clung on to some petty special privileges which it was thought that the present regime gave it.

As a matter of fact the two movements progressively developed on national lines, and in Kashmir, I am glad to say, a number of wise and farseeing Hindus and Sikhs threw their weight on the side of the popular movement and supported the 'National Demand' which asked for responsible government. I am sure that in Hyderabad many farseeing Muslims will do likewise. The leaders of these movements in both the States realise the extreme importance of steering clear of communalism and have tried to do

so. They must not weaken at any moment in this or else they will injure their cause. The minorities must also realise that it is inevitable that responsible government will come to the States, and freedom will bring rich gifts for them as much as for the others. To oppose this struggle of the people or to be passive spectators in it is to prove unworthy of and false to the future that beckons to us all.

Because Hyderabad and Kashmir have essentially the same problem, though it has a different complexion in each, it should not be difficult to consider the two together and to offer the same solution, in so far as minority rights are concerned. That solution should be in keeping with the broad principles laid down by the Congress and must fit in with responsible government.

In Hyderabad a peculiar situation arose some time back which resulted in producing a certain confusion in the public mind. The State Congress was declared an illegal organisation although its activity was the perfectly peaceful and constitutional one of enrolling members and strengthening its organisation. But the State has been nurtured in the traditions of the mediaeval age and even this was objected to and stopped. The State Congress thereupon justifiably refused to agree to this ban and attempted to carry on their activities. This involved peaceful Satyagraha and hundreds suffered under it. About the same time or a little later, a religious organisation and a communal organisation also started some kind of satyagraha. In the case of the religious organisation the reason was the banning of the State authorities of certain religious ceremonials and forms of worship which are commonly practised all over India. It is astonishing that the authorities should have taken this step which strikes at the root of religious liberty in

India and goes counter to the professed principles of every one. It was natural that this should cause resentment. But it was unfortunate that satyagraha should have been started on this basis at that time. This confused the issue and gave an excuse to the State authorities to put the demand for political freedom in the background.

After careful consideration of all the aspects of the situation the State Congress was advised to suspend its satyagraha so that the political issue might not be mixed up with communal and religious ones. The State Congress thereupon suspended their satyagraha. In spite of this the Hyderabad authorities had not the wisdom or the grace to release the satyagrahi prisoners or to remove their extraordinary ban on the organisation.

Unfortunately the communal and religious satyagraha was continued by the other organisations and the communal aspect of the question became intensified and conflicts took place in distant parts of India. Those responsible for it paid little heed to the consequences of their action, nor did they realise that a popular movement is an organic growth from below and cannot be artificially imposed from above. As a result of this the political movement for freedom has received a set back and the communal issue dominates the scene.

In Kashmir also the civil disobedience campaign was suspended last year to give a chance to the State authorities to retrace their steps and remedy some of the evils they had done. But they lack wisdom and grace also and in spite of this suspension hundreds of civil disobedience prisoners, including the leader of the movement, Shaikh Mohamad Abdulla, continued in prison, and the infamous ordinance known as Notification 19-L as well as the Seditious Meetings Act of

1914 still function.

It is obvious that both in Kashmir and Hyderabad existing conditions cannot be put up with and if the State authorities continue to act in the manner they have so far done, a resumption of civil disobedience will become inevitable.

None of us wants conflict, but in this dissolving age conflict surrounds us at every step and the world rattles back to chaos and the rule of brutal violence. None of us wants this chaos in India for that is no prelude to freedom. Yet while we recognise that our strength grows, the forces of disruption and disintegration, of communalism and provincialism, of irresponsibility and narrow-mindedness also grow. We have to remember that British Imperialism, though weakening at its centre, is still a formidable opponent, and freedom will have to be purchased by many a struggle. Neither we nor any one else in the world can view the future light-heartedly for the present is full of sorrow and disaster, and the immediate future of the world is wrapped in gloom. Yet in India there are gleams of hope though dark clouds assail us. And the brightest of these rays comes from the newly-awakened people of the States. We who presume to shoulder the burden of their struggle have a heavy responsibility and it will require all our courage and our wisdom to discharge that faithfully. Strong language will not help us; it is often a sign of weakness and a substitute for action. It is action that is demanded today, wise and effective action which takes us speedily to our goal, controls the forces of disruption, and builds up the united India of our dreams.

Petty gains and advantages may lure us from time to time, but if they come in the way of the larger objective, they must be rejected and swept away.

In the excitement of the moment we may feel inclined to forget our principles; if we surrender to this inclination, we do so at our peril. Our cause is a great one, so must our means be above reproach. We play for high stakes, let us be worthy of them. Great causes and little men go ill together.

The freedom of the people of the States is a big enough thing, yet it is part of the larger freedom of India, and till we gain that larger freedom, it is struggle for us. If the federation is imposed upon us, we shall fight it and sweep it away. Wherever the British Power intervenes against the people in the States, we shall have to face it. The time approaches when the final solution has to come—the Constituent Assembly of all the Indian people framing the constitution of a free and democratic India.

The States' Peoples' Conference has done good work in the past but this has been only a fraction of the work it might have done. It must now turn to the efficient organisation of all its activities, so that it might become a clearing house for all that pertains to the States, and a source of help and inspiration to all our comrades in the struggle. It must help in building up Praja Mandals or people's organisations in the States. It must take care to steer clear of all communalism, and it must, above all remember, and make others remember, that non-violence is the basis of this struggle.

It is our great good fortune that in this struggle we have the backing of the National Congress and the support of its leaders. Most cheering of all is the thought that we have Gandhiji to guide us and inspire.

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CONSTITUTION

OF

The All India States' People's Conference

CONSTITUTION

OF

The All India States' People's Conference

*Revised and passed at the Udaipur, Session of the
Conference—January, '46)*

ARTICLE—I.

The object of the All India States' People's Conference is the attainment by peaceful and legitimate means of full responsible government by the people of the States as integral parts of a free and federated India.

ARTICLE—II.

The All India States' People's Conference shall comprise :-

- (1) Affiliated States' People's organizations,
- (2) Recognised States' People's organizations,
- (3) Regional Councils,
- (4) General Council,
- (5) Annual Conference.
- (6) Special Session of the Conference, and
- (7) Standing Committee.

ARTICLE—III.

No person shall be entitled to hold any elective post in this Conference or in any of its constituent bodies if he or she is a member of a communal or any other organization, the object and programme of which involve political activities which in the opinion of the Standing Committee are in conflict with those of the Conference.

ARTICLE—IV.

(a) For the purpose of the Conference, the States are divided into the following groups to be called Regions:—

1. Kashmir and Jammu (including N. W. Frontier States).
2. Hyderabad.
3. Baroda (including Gujrat States.)
4. Mysore (including Bengannepalli and Sandur.)
5. Central India States, Benares and Rampur.
6. Travancore, Cochin, Pudukotta.
7. Orissa States, Bastar and C. P. States.
8. Manipur, Cooch-Bihar and Tripura.
9. Deccan States (in Maharashtra and Karnatak).
10. Punjab States.
11. Himalayan Hill States.
12. Baluchistan States (Kalat, Lasbella, Kharan and Khairpur.)
13. Kathiawar States (including Cutch).
14. Rajputana States.

(b) The Standing Committee may regroup the States in forming Regions whenever it considers this desirable.

ARTICLE—V.

States' People's organizations known as Praja Mandals, Lok Parishads, Praja Parishads, States' Congresses, National Conferences or by similar names functioning in a single State or a group of States or from outside under special circumstances with the approval of the Standing Committee, may be affiliated to or recognised by the A. I. S. P. Conference, through Regional Councils or direct, in accordance with this constitution.

ARTICLE—VI.

(a) The Regional Council may affiliate any States' People's organization within that Region provided:—

(ART. VI—*contd.*)

1. It has accepted by resolution Article (1) of this constitution,
2. It has a minimum of a hundred (100) primary members for one lakh of population or less on its roll,
3. It has been functioning regularly for a period of at least one year, and
4. It agrees to pay the affiliation and annual fees as fixed from time to time by the Standing Committee.

(b) The Standing Committee may, in special circumstances, give direct affiliation to any States' People's organization.

(c) The Standing Committee may disaffiliate any affiliated organization for due cause shown and after due notice to the organization concerned; such notice shall not be less than one month's.

ARTICLE—VII.

The Standing Committee may recognize any States' People's organization working for the people of the States in accordance with the aims and objects of the Conference. Such recognised organizations shall be entitled to representation on the Conference and its constituent committees in accordance with the rules framed by the Standing Committee in this behalf. The Standing Committee will have the right to withdraw the recognition when it so chooses.

ARTICLE—VIII.

(a) Every Region will be entitled to elect one delegate for the session of the Conference for one lac of population of the State or States concerned in that region provided it has a hundred primary members on its roll for each such seat allotted to it.

(b) The Standing Committee will be entitled to nominate up to 50 delegates to give due representation to those organizations which, for some reasons, are otherwise unable to get themselves affiliated to or recognized by the All India States' People's Conference.

ARTICLE—IX.

(a) For every Region as laid down in Article. II, there shall be a Regional Council which will consist of:—

1. delegates of the Conference in that Region in addition to the President and ex-Presidents of the A. I. S. P. Conference residing within the region,
2. persons co-opted as members of the Regional Council by the delegates upto $1/8$ of its members. These co-opted members will exercise the rights and privileges of a delegate.

(b) Every Regional Council shall, subject to the general control and supervision of the Standing Committee, be in charge of affairs of that Region.

(c) The Regional Council will be competent to frame their own rules in conformity with the constitution. They will come into force after the approval of the Standing Committee of the Conference.

(d) On failure on the part of any Regional Council to function in terms of the constitution, the Standing Committee may form a provisional Council to carry on the work of the Conference in that Region.

ARTICLE—X.

(a) The General Council shall consist of:—

1. Members elected by each Regional Council in the proportion of one such member for every five members of the Regional Council provided that every Region will have a minimum representation of two members on the General Council, and
2. persons co-opted as members for the General Council by the elected members upto $1/8$ of their number.

(b) Members of the General Council shall pay five rupees each as fee to the Central Office before they are entitled to exercise their votes.

(ART. X—*contd.*)

(c) The General Council shall carry out the programme of work laid down by the Conference from session to session and deal with any new matters arising during its term of office.

(d) 30 or 1/5 of its members, whichever is less, shall be the quorum of the General Council.

ARTICLE—XI

(a) The Standing Committee shall consist of the President, Vice-President, one or more General Secretaries, a Treasurer and 16 other members. The President will be elected in the manner hereinafter provided for. The President shall nominate from amongst the members of the General Council all other members of the Standing Committee including the office-bearers.

(b) The Standing Committee shall be the executive authority of the Conference and shall have the power to give effect to the policy and programme laid down by the A. I. S. P. Conference and the General Council.

(c) The quorum of the Standing Committee shall be 6.

(d) The Standing Committee shall have power to—

1. frame rules and issue instructions for the proper working of the constitution and to meet emergencies,
2. to take such disciplinary action as it may deem fit against a committee or an individual for misconduct, neglect or default,
3. to superintend, inspect and direct all constituent committees.

ARTICLE—XII.

(a) The President of the Conference will continue to function till the next session. He will also be the Chariman of the General Council.

(b) The General Secretary or Secretaries of the Conference will also be the Secretary or Secretaries of the General Council

(ART. XII—*contd.*)

and the Standing Committee. He or they will present an annual report about the working of the organization to the General Council.

(c) The Treasurer shall be in charge of the funds of the Conference and shall maintain proper accounts for the same. An audited statement of accounts shall be presented to the General Council for its information.

ARTICLE—XIII.

(a) The Standing Committee shall invite suggestions for the election of the President from the Regional Councils.

(b) The members of the General Council shall elect the President from this suggested list at least one month before the session of the Conference.

(c) The Standing Committee shall frame rules for this election.

ARTICLE—XIV.

(a) The Annual Conference shall be held at the place and time decided upon by the Standing Committee.

(b) The Reception Committee for the Annual Session shall be formed by the Regional Council of the Region where the session is to be held.

(c) The new General Council of the Conference shall meet as the Subjects Committee of the Conference before its session under the chairmanship of the President-elect.

(d) The delegate's fee will be rupees three. All such fees will be handed over by the Reception Committee to the Central Office. The savings of the Reception Committee will be shared equally by the local Praja Mandal, the Regional Council and the Central Office.

ARTICLE—XV.

The General Council, on the recommendation of the Standing Committee, will be competent to make necessary changes in the constitution. Such changes will be submitted to the next session of the Conference for its approval.

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